

Di Zi Gui

***Standards for Being
a Good Student and Child***

Seven Subjects and 113 Rules

**paragraph formatting by
Venerable Master Chin Kung**

translated and revised
by Julia Lieu
Pure Land Learning College

Di Zi Gui

Not for sale

Reproduction is welcome and allowed
for free circulation only.

This book, or parts thereof,
may not be altered in any form without permission.

Copyright © 2002, 2004, 2005, 2008
by Pure Land Learning College

All rights reserved.

For more information
Please contact dizigui@diziguipractice.org

Pure Land Books
ISBN 192 085 57 77

<http://www.diziguipractice.org>

Di Zi Gui

Standards for Being a Good Student and Child

CONTENTS

Introduction

Outline

Chapter 1: At Home, Be Dutiful to Your Parents

Chapter 2: Standards for a Younger Brother When Away from Home

Chapter 3: Be Cautious in Your Daily Life

Chapter 4: Be Trustworthy

Chapter 5: Love All Equally

Chapter 6: Be Close to and Learn from People of Virtue and Compassion

Chapter 7: After All the Above Are Accomplished, Study Further and

Learn Literature and Art to Improve Your Cultural and Spiritual Life

Conclusion: Words of Encouragement

INTRODUCTION

Di Zi Gui is an ancient Chinese book, which in English means standards for being a good student and child. It was used in the ancient past by children in China before they entered school. The book provided guidelines for children in regard to becoming good students and children.

The source for the outline of this book can be traced back to ***Analects of Confucius***, Book 1, Chapter 6, in which Confucius said:

Good students and good children should first learn to be dutiful to their parents, and be respectful and loving to their siblings. Next, they should be cautious with all people and in their dealings with all matters and things, and they should be trustworthy. They should believe in the teachings of the ancient saints and sages and put their teachings into practice. Then they should learn to love all people equally and associate with and learn from people of virtue and compassion. Only after all the above duties have been accomplished, if they have time and energy, they should further study and learn literature and art to improve the quality of their cultural and spiritual lives.

Although the book is ancient, its underlying moral principles are still valid today. In the recent past, there has been a revival of *Di Zi Gui*. Both parents and teachers have come to realize that they need guidelines for teaching their children moral behavior so their children will grow up to be law abiding citizens with a strong sense of morality. They are motivated to teach this book because they want their children to have bright and promising futures and ultimate happiness. However, both parents and teachers must abide by the rules first before they are able to effectively teach the rules to their children.

Although *Di Zi Gui* is based on Confucian teachings, the fundamental principle underlying *Di Zi Gui* is also the foundation of the Three Teachings of the Chinese culture: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. In Chinese history, Confucius has always been considered the greatest and the best teacher. His influence extends even throughout the world today. Confucius

believed that moral principles, virtues and discipline should be the very first lessons taught to a child, and that children need to practice them daily. It was most important to the ancient Chinese parents that their children learn moral principles and virtues first – before any other subject, because without moral principles, the learning of all other subjects would be futile.

Today, we live in a tumultuous world where the relationships among people, between people and their environment, parents and children, husbands and wives, and employers and employees are failing. Our family unit is also disintegrating, as evidenced by an ever-increasing divorce rate. Even our physical existence is no longer guaranteed because of global warming. We are not just fearful for our futures, but also for the futures of our children. In reintroducing this book, I hope all parents, teachers and children will find *Di Zi Gui* a useful tool to guide them through life's difficulties.

All the footnotes in this book are added to help readers more easily understand the text. Chinese characters contain extensive and profound meanings. If the readers feel I have not yet fully explained the text, I apologize. Your comments are most welcome.

It is also important to note that the standards of *Di Zi Gui* were used in ancient China, at a time when only the male child was allowed to enter school. Therefore, all the pronouns used in the original text are of the male gender. In today's society, the standards apply equally to all children, male and female.

Julia Lieu, translator
Pure Land Learning College

Di Zi Gui

Standards for Being a Good Student and Child

OUTLINE

"Standards for Being a Good Student and Child"¹

was taught by Chinese saints and sages of the ancient past.

First, these standards teach you how to be dutiful to your parents, and how to be respectful and loving to your siblings.²

Then they teach you to be cautious with all people, and in your dealings with all matters and things, to be trustworthy, and to believe in the teachings of the ancient saints and sages.³

Furthermore, they teach you to love all people equally, and to associate with and learn from people of virtue and compassion.

When you have accomplished all the above duties, you can study further and learn from literature and art to improve the quality of your cultural and spiritual life.

Chapter 1: At home, Be Dutiful to Your Parents

1. When your parents call you, answer them right away.
2. When they command you to do something, do it quickly.
3. When your parents instruct you, listen respectfully.
4. When your parents reproach you, obey and accept their scolding; try hard to change and improve yourself and start anew.
5. In the winter, make sure your parents keep warm.
6. In the summer, make sure your parents keep cool.
7. Greet them in the morning to show them that you care.
8. At night be sure that they rest well.
9. Before going out, tell your parents where you are going, for parents are always concerned about their children.
10. After returning home, let your parents know that you are back, so they do not worry about you.
11. Have a permanent place to stay, and lead a routine life.
12. Persist in whatever you do and do not change your aspirations at will.
13. Although a matter may be considered trivial, if it is wrong or unfair to another person, do not do it and think that it will bear little or no consequence.⁴ If you do, you are not being a dutiful child because parents do not want to see their child doing things that are irresponsible or illegal.
14. Although a possession may be small, do not hoard it and refuse to share. If you do, your parents will be saddened.⁵

15. If whatever pleases your parents is fair and reasonable, try your best to provide it for them.⁶
16. Whatever displeases your parents, if within reason,⁷ refrain from doing it.
17. If you hurt your body, you will worry your parents.
18. If you compromise your virtue⁸, your parents will feel ashamed.
19. When you have loving parents, you can easily become a dutiful child.
20. If you are still dutiful to parents who dislike you, you will be true to the standards of the saints and sages for being a dutiful child.
21. When your parents do wrong, urge them to change. Do so with a kind facial expression and a warm gentle voice. If they do not accept your advice, wait until they are in a happier mood before you dissuade them again, followed by crying, if necessary, to make them understand why. If they end up whipping you,⁹ do not hold a grudge against them.
22. When your parents are ill, taste (Chinese) medicine first before giving it to them.¹⁰ Take care of them night and day; do not leave their bedside.
23. During the first three years of mourning after they have passed away, remember them with gratitude and lament that you were not able to repay them for their kindness in raising you. During this period, you should arrange your home to reflect your grief and sorrow. Avoid festivities and indulgence in food and alcoholic drinks.
24. Observe the proper etiquette¹¹ in arranging their funerals. Hold the memorial ceremony and commemorate their anniversaries with your utmost sincerity. Serve your departed parents as if they were alive.¹²

Chapter 2: Standards for a Younger Brother

When Away from Home

1. Older siblings should befriend the younger ones; younger siblings should respect and love the older ones. Siblings who keep harmonious relationships among themselves are being dutiful to their parents.¹³
2. When siblings value their ties more than property and belongings, no resentment will grow among them.
3. When siblings are careful with words and hold back hurtful comments, feelings of anger naturally dissolve.
4. Whether you are drinking, eating, walking, or sitting, let the elders go first; younger ones follow.
5. When an elder is asking for someone, locate that person for him right away. If you cannot find that person, immediately report back, and put yourself at the elder's service instead.
6. When you address an elder, do not call him by his first name.¹⁴
7. When in front of an elder, do not show off.
8. If you meet an elder you know on the street, promptly clasp your hands and greet him with a bow. If he does not speak to you, step back and respectfully stand aside.
9. If you are riding on a horse and you spot an elder you know walking¹⁵, dismount and pay respect to the elder. If you are riding in a carriage,¹⁶ stop, get out of the carriage, and ask if you can give him a ride. If you meet an elder passing by, stand aside and wait respectfully; do not

leave until you can no longer see him.

10. When an elder is standing, do not sit. After an elder sits down, sit only when you are told to do so.
11. Before an elder, speak softly. But if your voice is too low and hard to hear, you are not being appropriate.
12. When meeting an elder, walk briskly towards him; when leaving, do not exit in haste. When answering a question, look at the person who is asking you the question.
13. Serve your uncles as if you are serving your parents;¹⁷ treat your cousins as if they are your own siblings.¹⁸

Chapter 3: Be Cautious in Your Daily Life

1. Get up in the morning before your parents; at night, go to bed only after they have gone to sleep. When you realize that time is passing you by and that you are getting older year by year, treasure the present moment.¹⁹
2. When you get up in the morning, wash your face and brush your teeth.
3. After using the toilet, always wash your hands.
4. Wear your hat straight,²⁰ and make sure the hooks²¹ of your clothes are tied. Make sure socks and shoes are worn neatly and correctly.
5. Place your hat and clothes away in their proper places. Do not carelessly throw your clothes around, for that will get them dirty.
6. It is more important that your clothes are clean than that they are opulent. When with an elder or important person, wear what is suitable for your station. At home, wear clothes in accordance with your family traditions and customs.
7. When eating and drinking, do not pick your food. Eat only the right amount; do not overeat.
8. Because you are still young, do not drink alcohol. A drunk's behavior is ugly.
9. Walk composed, with light and even steps. Stand up straight and tall.
10. When bowing, bow deeply, with hands held in front and arms rounded. Always pay your respect with reverence.²²
11. Do not step on doorsills. Do not stand leaning on one leg. Do not sit with your legs apart or sprawled out. Do not rock the lower part of your

body while sitting down.

12. Lift the curtain slowly;²³ do not make a sound.
13. Leave yourself room when you turn to make sure you do not bump into a corner.
14. Carefully hold empty containers as if they are full.²⁴
15. Enter empty rooms as if they are occupied.²⁵
16. Avoid doing things in a hurry, since acting in haste will lead to many mistakes.
17. Do not be afraid of difficult tasks, and do not become careless when a job is too easy.
18. Keep away from rowdy places.
19. Do not ask about the abnormal or the unusual.
20. When you are about to enter a main entrance, ask if someone is inside.
21. Before entering a room, make yourself heard, so that those inside know someone is approaching.
22. If someone asks who you are, give your name. If you answer "Me" or "It is Me", people will not know who you are.
23. Before borrowing from others, ask for permission. If you do not ask, you are stealing.
24. When borrowing things from others, return them promptly. Later, when you have an urgent need, you will not have a problem borrowing from them again.

Chapter 4: Be Trustworthy

1. When you speak, honesty is important. Deceitful words and lies are not acceptable.
2. Rather than talking too much, speak less. Speak the truth; do not twist the facts.
3. Cunning words, foul language, and bad habits must be avoided at all costs.
4. What you have not seen with your own eyes, do not readily tell others. What you do not know for sure, do not readily pass on to others.
5. When asked to do something that is inappropriate or bad, do not be quick to agree. If you agree, you will be wrong for either keeping or breaking your promise.
6. When speaking, speak clearly and to the point. Do not talk too fast or mumble.
7. Some people talk about the good points of others, while some talk about their faults. If it is none of your business, do not get involved.
8. When you see others do good deeds, think about following their example. Even if you have not achieved as they have, you are getting closer to the ideal which they represent.
9. When you see others do wrong, immediately reflect upon your own behavior. If you have made the same mistake, correct it. If not, be extra cautious that you do not make the same mistake.
10. When your morals, conduct, knowledge, and skills are not as good as others, encourage yourself to be better.

11. If the clothes you wear and the food you eat and drink are not as good as others, do not be ashamed.
12. If criticism makes you angry and compliments make you happy, you will attract bad company, and good friends will shy away from you.
13. If you are uneasy about compliments and appreciative of criticism, sincere, understanding and virtuous people will gradually become close to you.
14. If you do not make a mistake on purpose, it is only an error. If you do it on purpose, it is evil.
15. If you correct your mistake and do not repeat it, you will not make the same mistake again. If you try to cover it up, you will be doubly wrong.

Chapter 5: Love All Equally

1. Love all human beings equally, regardless of their nationality, race, or religion. We are all sheltered by the same sky and we all live on the same planet Earth.
2. A person of high ideals and morals is highly respected. What people value is not based on external appearance.
3. A person's outstanding ability will naturally honor him with a good reputation. Admiration from others does not come from boasting or praising oneself.
4. If you are a very capable person, use your abilities for the benefit of others. Do not slander other people because of their competence.
5. Do not flatter the rich.
6. Do not despise the poor.
7. Do not ignore old friends.
8. Do not take delight only in new friends.
9. When a person is busy, do not bother him.
10. When a person's mind is not at peace, do not bother him by talking.
11. If a person has a shortcoming, do not expose it.
12. If a person has a secret, do not tell others.
13. Praising the goodness of others is meritorious. When you approve of and praise others, they will be encouraged and try even harder.
14. Spreading rumors about the wrongdoings of others is a wrongdoing. As the small harms you do others accumulate and become extreme, you will suffer serious consequences as a result.

15. When you encourage each other to do good, you both increase in virtue.
16. If you do not tell others of their faults, you will both be in the wrong.
17. Whether you take or give, you need to know the difference between the two. It is better to give more and take less.
18. What you ask others to do, first ask yourself if you would do it. If it is not something you would do, do not ask others to do it.
19. Repay the kindness of others and let go of your resentments. Spend less time holding grudges and more time paying back the kindness of others.
20. When you are directing maids and servants or your subordinates, treat them with respect and dignity. Although treating them with respect and dignity is important, also treat them kindly and generously.
21. If you use your influence to demand submission from your subordinates, their hearts will never be with you. If you can convince them with sound reasoning, they will have no reason to object.

Chapter 6: Be Close to and Learn from People of Virtue and Compassion

1. We are all human, but we are not the same. Most of us are ordinary; only a very few have great virtues and high moral principles.
2. A truly virtuous person is greatly respected by others. He will not be afraid to speak the truth and he will not fawn on others.
3. If you associate with and learn from people of great virtue and compassion, you will benefit immensely. Your virtues will grow daily and your wrongdoings will lessen day by day.
4. If you do not associate with and learn from people of great virtue, you will suffer a great loss. You will attract people without virtue, and nothing you do will succeed.

Chapter 7: After All the Above Are Accomplished, Study Further and Learn Literature and Art to Improve Your Cultural and Spiritual Life

1. If you do not actively make use of what you have learned before you study literature and art, your knowledge will only be superficial. What kind of person will you be?
2. If you apply your knowledge diligently, but stop studying, you will only act according to your own opinions, thinking you are correct. But in fact, you do not know the truth.
3. There are methods for studying correctly. They involve concentration in three areas: your mind, your eyes, and your mouth. Believing what you read is equally important.
4. When you begin to read a book, do not think about another. If you have not completed the book, do not start another.
5. Give yourself plenty of time to study, and study hard. In time and with effort,²⁶ you will thoroughly understand the text.
6. If you have a question, make a note of it. Ask the person who has the knowledge for the right answer.
7. Keep your room neat, your walls uncluttered and clean, your desk tidy and your brush²⁷ and inkstone²⁸ properly placed.
8. If you grind your ink block²⁹ unevenly, you are in a poor state of mind. If your words are written carelessly and without respect, your mind is unwell.³⁰
9. Books³¹ should be classified, placed on the bookshelves, and in their

proper places. After you finish reading a book, put it back in its right place.

10. Even though you are in a hurry, neatly roll up and bind the open bamboo scroll you were reading.
11. Repair any missing or damaged pages.
12. Discard and do not look at books that are not on the teachings of the saints and sages. These other books can block your intelligence and wisdom, and will undermine your aspirations and sense of direction.

Conclusion: Words of Encouragement

Neither be harsh on yourself, nor give up on yourself. In time, we can all become persons of high ideals, moral standards and virtue.

Footnotes:

¹ Selected from *Analects of Confucius, Book I, Chapter 6*, and taught by Confucius, Mencius, and other Chinese saints and sages of the ancient past.

² "**Xiao**" and "**Ti**" have been the very foundation of Chinese culture for five thousand years. **Xiao** "孝" means to be dutiful and affectionate with one's parents, and to understand the basic relationship of grandparents, parents and self. In ideogram form, xiao has two components - the top part of xiao is the top portion of the word elder "老" and the bottom part is the word son "子." Combined, it implies that the older generation and the younger generation are one: that there should be no gap between them. In Buddhism, the meaning is further extended. Outside the family, the child should treat every male and female of the parents' generation as if they are the child's own father and mother. **Ti** "悌" means sincere fraternal love. Here it is used more as the principle and standard of conduct of the younger brother towards his older brother when the younger brother is away from home. In Buddhism, its meaning also extends further to include conduct towards all older persons of any one generation.

³ "To believe in the teachings of the ancient saints and sages" means to actually practice and put the teachings of the ancient saints and sages into effect.

⁴ For example, in Buddhism, you break the precept of not stealing if you borrow a piece of paper or take someone's pen without permission. You break the precept of not killing if you kill an ant or mosquito. If you lie or talk about someone behind his back, you break the precept of not lying, etc.

⁵ Your parents will be saddened by your actions, because if their child behaves in such a way when he is still young, then he will probably twist the law in order to obtain bribes, and will be a curse to his country and his people when he grows up.

⁶ If what pleases your parents is illegitimate or unreasonable, you should tactfully dissuade your parents, and tell them the reasons why they should not do it.

⁷ You should lead your parents to proper views and understanding.

⁸ Virtues are standards and principles of personal conduct. In China a man's conduct is ruled by "Wu Chang" 五常 and "Ba De" 八德. "Wu Chang" are the five moral principles: kindheartedness 仁, personal loyalty 義, proper etiquette 禮, wisdom 智, and trustworthiness 信. "Ba De" are the

eight virtues: duty to parents 孝, respect for elders 悌, loyalty 忠, credibility 信, proper etiquette 禮, personal loyalty 義, a sense of honor 廉, and a sense of shame 恥.

⁹ In ancient China, when a child did not obey the parents, the parents were allowed to discipline the child. If a child refused to be disciplined, the parents had the right to ask the authorities to have the child executed.

¹⁰ Chinese people take herbal medicine prescribed by Chinese doctors. Herbs are boiled with water to make a liquid medicine. Before giving such medicine to one's parents, a child should taste it first to make sure it is not too hot or too bitter.

¹¹ In ancient China, etiquette for funerals was set by the emperor.

¹² When our parents are alive, we should treat them with our love and respect. After they pass away, we should, in deepest sorrow, arrange their funerals. For all the subsequent commemorations and anniversaries, we should show our love and respect as if they were still alive.

¹³ Parents are happy when their children get along with each other. This is one way children can show they are dutiful to their parents.

¹⁴ In Ancient China, a male had at least two names. The first name was the "given name," which was given to him by his parents when he was born. A second name was given to him by his friends when he reached the age of 20, at a "Ceremony of the Hat" given in his honor to announce his coming of age. After that only his parents called him by his "given name." Everyone else, out of respect, including the emperor, could only call him by his second name. The only exception was if he committed a crime. During sentencing, he would be called by his "given name."

¹⁵ In Ancient China, most people used horses or carriages as their means of transportation.

¹⁶ See footnote 15.

¹⁷ See footnote 2.

¹⁸ See footnote 2.

¹⁹ There is an old Chinese proverb: "A unit of time is as precious as a unit of gold, but you cannot buy back one unit of time with one unit of gold." It means that time is really very precious, as no amount of money can buy time.

²⁰ In ancient China, when a male wore a hat, it meant he was no longer a

child, but is now an adult.

²¹ In ancient China, in place of buttons, people used hooks. When dressed, hooks had to be tied.

²² In ancient China, people paid their respect to other people by bowing, holding one hand over the other closed hand, or prostrating on the ground.

²³ In ancient China, curtains were made of bamboo strips woven together. They were used to shelter a room from view.

²⁴ Even though a container may be empty, out of reverence, whether living or not, one should treat it with respect and handle it with care.

²⁵ In ancient China, a virtuous man always behaved properly, regardless of whether he was alone or with others.

²⁶ If you do not understand part of book you are reading, read it again and again, even a thousand times. Its meaning will come to you naturally.

²⁷ "Brush" here means a Chinese writing brush.

²⁸ "Inkstone" is a stone stand used for the preparing and holding the ink used in Chinese brush calligraphy.

²⁹ "Ink block" is a solid ink piece. A person grinds it with water against the inkstone to make ink for writing Chinese brush calligraphy.

³⁰ In Ancient China, words were written in calligraphy with brushstrokes representing the soul of the writer. Even today, carelessly done brushstrokes indicate that the person is mentally ill.

³¹ Here, "books" refer to books on laws, constitutions, and the structural systems of a nation.

Dedication of Merit

May the merits and virtues accumulated from this work
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Land,
Repay the kindness received from the Four Levels above,
And help to relieve the sufferings of
The Three Paths below.

If the ones who see and hear of this text
Become inspired and enlightened,
Within this lifetime, may they too seek to be reborn
In the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Homage to Amitabha Buddha!